

The Negro Question

By J. R. JOHNSON

(Robert L. Birchman has written this week's column, in the absence of comrade Johnson.)

"We say to our children, do not bring in a red cent for this cause." This was the editorial advice given by the Louisiana Weekly, Negro newspaper in New Orleans, in condemning the attempt of the School Board to force Negro students, parents and teachers to contribute to the Hoover Finnish Aid Fund. It cites the fact that Negro education in Louisiana is 25 years behind that of the whites and that Negroes are in at least as dire need as the Finns. Many of the Negro teachers protested the program of the School Board to have them write letters to the parents asking for money.

This is but one of many cases of resentment of the Negro press to the attempt of the Hoover Finnish Aid Fund to solicit funds from Negroes. The "Laundryman" column in the California Eagle (Jan. 25, 1940), speaking of the proposed government loan to Finland states: "It seems to me that it would be much more practical, much more rational, to shoot this \$25,000,000 here in America to bolster the relief checks of thousands of undernourished, impoverished Americans."

Ethiopia Called To Defend Finland!

The Chicago Defender, in an editorial (Feb. 3, 1940) on the League of Nations states: "Members of the League of Nations have made another gesture which should expose their utter and complete hypocrisy to the world—especially to the world of colored peoples."

"The League has asked aid of Haile Selassie for Finland. Shades of Saint Peter and Paul! Was it not the same League that sold the King of Kings down the river. What colossal shamelessness."

"For the Negro people to send funds to the Finnish Mannerheims and Tanners, who have forced thousands of Finns to leave their country, and to flee to America seeking democracy and freedom, would be like a Negro sending money to Cotton Ed Smith and Bilbo of Carolina and Mississippi.

"Black men who fled Mississippi, wouldn't send money to help those who lynch and murder 'Negroes,' would they?"

Roy Wilkins, in his column in the Amsterdam News (Jan. 13, 1940) advises the Negro people to keep their thinking straight on the main issues before the public:

"Specifically I have in mind the present sweep of ultra-reactionary propaganda, marching to new power and prominence behind the 'Help Finland' movement. The plight of Finland has provided a new screen for vicious assaults upon any progressive, liberal or radical thought. The mighty wire-pullers in America are tugging at the heartstrings of the notoriously soft-hearted American public ostensibly for the relief of the Finns, but in reality for the destruction of what few gains have been made in past years in social advancement.

"We are told that Finland is fighting 'for God and Western civilization' against the 'pagan Oriental hordes of Russia' and that in effect, America's first line of defense is the Mannerheim line. George E. Sokolsky, hireling of the National Manufacturers' Association, who writes for the New York Herald Tribune, greets the New Year with a piece in which he suddenly discovers (as did the Kaiser) that God is mixed up in this war business. Pulling out all stops, letting himself go in an emotional orgy, and raking up all the tried and true Fourth of July oratorical cliches, Sokolsky tells us the Finns may yet win the war—the larger war 'between liberty and despotism, between civilization and collectivism, between Christianity and paganism, between the progress of mankind and the degradation of mankind.'"

Negroes Won't Be Taken In

"This drive to 'clean out the Reds' and smear anything progressive with Red paint is one of which Negroes should beware. They should ask themselves how much of liberty and of despotism they have had under these American skies. A nation which has resisted stubbornly for forty years any attempt to wipe out the shooting, hanging and burning of human beings at the stake has a lot of nerve trying to tell Negroes it is civilized and the other fellow is a heathen. A nation whose Christianity is ruled by the color line has a nerve pointing to someone else as a pagan. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'"

"An empire with its heel on 400 million black and brown men has a nerve talking about despotism. And, closer at home to Negroes, the National Manufacturers' Association, many of whose members fight labor in open warfare with spies, tear gas and guns, and most of whose members shut the door of employment in the face of Negroes, has its nerve talking about liberty and despotism."

Martin D. Richardson, in his column "Left Face" in the Boston Chronicle (Feb. 19, 1940), states: "... the newspapers are very careful to make sure that you do not have too much of an opportunity to distinguish between the 'poor Finnish people' and the vicious, tricky Mannerheim regime, the feudal-lord followers, few though they are, of General Mannerheim, after whom the Finnish defense line is named and with whom the British and French have been making for joint invasion of Soviet Russia, their real aim, if we take the word of their own Lloyd George. General Mannerheim and his clique of money-hogs bear the same relation to the Finnish people that the Mikados and the Mitsui family do to the Japanese laborers and peasants whose daughters they force into the streets; they are as much of the 'Finnish people' as the Lady Astor set is to the millions of Limehouse cockneys in London. ... That Soviet Russia and the Mannerheim group happen to be fighting it out in the ice and snow of the Karelian peninsula is but a circumstance; Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler and Co., would have engineered the showdown somewhere, anyhow."

The above comments are typical of the attitude and opinions of the Negro press on the Finnish war and clearly indicate that the Negroes are not readily falling for the war propaganda of America's Sixty Families and their paid hirelings under the slogan to "make the world safe for democracy."

ON THE WAR IN FINLAND:

Why We Should Defend the Soviet Union

By ALBERT GOLDMAN

VI

When Stalin ordered the Red Army to invade Finland, we condemned the invasion; but we did not permit his crime to deter us from our fundamental policy of defending the Soviet Union. The Finnish capitalist government represents the imperialist world and our policy of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against capitalism applies in the war against Finland. While the advanced workers of the Soviet Union must not give up their struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy, and while the advanced workers of Finland must redouble their efforts to overthrow the Finnish capitalist government, both the Russian and the Finnish workers, as well as the workers throughout the rest of the world, must do everything in their power to prevent a defeat of the Soviet Union.

"Terrible," cried every middle-class democrat, beginning with the liberals and going on through Norman Thomas and his Socialist Call, the Lovestonites, and even close sympathizers of our movement. They did not understand our program or expected us to do what they did: cave in under the pressure of the bourgeois democrats. The difference between all of these people and ourselves is the difference between the revolutionary Marxists led by Lenin in 1914 and the others who called themselves "socialists." Lenin did not yield an inch to the capitalists when war actually came, while the others showed that in reality they were nothing more than middle-class democrats.

"DEMOCRATIC" ARGUMENTS FOR SUPPORT OF FINLAND

These pseudo-Marxist critics falsify our position by insisting that our party supports Stalin's invasion. In the Feb. 17 Nation, in his swan song bidding goodbye to whatever Marxism he still possessed, the Lovestonite Lewis Corey makes the assertion that according to the Appeal "the invasion of Finland is justified." These critics omit the obvious fact that from the very beginning we have condemned the invasion on the ground that it has discredited the Soviet Union in the eyes of the working masses.

The Socialist party of Norman Thomas and the Lovestonites have approximately the same position: more or less open support of the Finnish capitalist government. The Lovestonites are a little more careful and use a few more Marxist phrases than the Thomastites, but essentially they agree that the Red Army should be defeated by the Finnish bourgeois army.

Let us take a glance at the position of our critics, especially those who claim to speak in the name of Marxism. We need not argue with the liberals, the social-democrats and labor bureaucrats, with the people, that is, who openly support the falsehood that the war between England and Germany is a war for democracy against fascism, with the people who, in advance, have promised their whole-hearted support to the American government when it deems it advisable to enter the war. The advanced workers understand these people well and there is no danger that they will follow them.

If there is any danger that the advanced workers, due to their justifiable hatred of the Stalinist bureaucracy, will be led to take a wrong position, it is because there are those who glibly speak in the name of Marxism and advance the false theory that on the basis of Marxist principles we must either support the Finnish government against the Soviet Union or else be indifferent to the victory of either side.

To justify their position both the Socialist party and the Lovestonites point to the "democratic character" of the Finnish government. They furnish us with figures showing that there are 85 "socialists" in the Finnish parliament and "143 representatives of workers and peasants." On the same basis, however, the workers should be asked to support France and England. Are there not more representatives of the workers in the parliaments of those countries than in the Reichstag of Germany? These "Marxists" have found a new criterion to determine whether the workers should support one capitalist country as against another, namely, the relative number of representatives of workers in the parliaments of the countries fighting each other!

Revolutionary Marxists can only look with contempt upon these people who have not yet learned or who have forgotten that the capitalist state remains a capitalist state no matter how many "socialists" there may be in parliament, that the capitalist state, in any war, defends the interests of the capitalist class and these interests are of no concern to the workers.

It is only in a case of civil war between fascists and a democratic government that the workers can give material (but not political) support to the latter. That is what our party advocated in the Spanish civil war. In a war between imperialist countries, the only thing that can possibly be at stake are the rival imperialist interests. In the war between Finland and the Soviet Union, the Finnish capitalist army is not fighting for democracy against fascism. Regardless of the motives and intentions of Stalin, the war between the Soviet Union and Finland is a war of forces representing on the one hand nationalized property and on the other capitalist private property.

THE SOVIET UNION REPRESENTS THE FUTURE!

But do not the Finnish workers live under better conditions than the workers in the Soviet Union? Do they not have a higher standard of living and greater "freedom"? They leave the ground of Marxism who present such arguments.

One thing that every worker must understand is that capitalism is in a stage of decay and with it capitalist democracy. Whether in Finland or in any other part of the capitalist world, the workers face a choice between fascist slavery or the proletarian revolution. Capitalist democracy is doomed and whether it is this year or in ten or twenty years it will be destroyed by the fascists—or by the proletarian revolution establishing a higher form of democracy.

Finland is part of the decaying capitalist world. The foundation of the Soviet-Union, nationalized property, represents part of that future world of planned economy and the production of goods for the welfare of the people. In the last analysis the existence of the Stalinist regime is to be explained by the fact that the capitalist world still exists.

Let the workers destroy the capitalist world and Stalinism will have no base whatever. It will disappear from the Soviet Union like the scab on a sore from which the pus has been drained.

The advanced Finnish workers, considering the historic interests of their class have no alternative but to defend the Soviet Union from the capitalist world.

A "RADICAL" VERSION OF ANTI-SOVIETISM

A small group in the Socialist party, led by Herbert Zam, advocates a policy of defeatism for both camps. The people who advocate such a policy don't want to be caught helping Finland, which they recognize to be a tool of imperialism, but they are for the defeat of both sides. That sounds more revolutionary than helping Finland against the Soviet Union; but assuredly it is just as much against the principles of revolutionary Marxism.

Lenin advocated a policy of revolutionary defeatism for both camps in an imperialist war. He insisted that to carry on the struggle against one's own capitalist class even at the risk of a defeat at the front was a lesser evil than class peace and victory at the front. He was perfectly willing to take the risk of a defeat of his "own" imperialist government. If one tries to get at the basic reasons for his attitude it is clear that Lenin formulated such a policy because on both sides of the war the same prop-

MANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES!

Even more miserable are the arguments of the Lovestonites, who are proclaiming that the Trotskyites have capitulated to the Stalinists. Coming from the people who up to a few years ago justified every crime of Stalin, including the Moscow frame-up trials, this leaves one flabbergasted. In an article by Donald Graham, in the Feb. 17 Workers Age, we are completely laid low by the profound argument that since we support China against Japan in spite of the fact that Chiang-Kai-Shek is as ferocious a butcher as Mannerheim we can also support Finland.

For just one little reason, Mr. Graham, does our policy differ. China, a semi-colonial country, is attacked by Japan, an imperialist country; Finland, a capitalist country and the outpost and tool of English imperialism, is attacked by the Soviet Union, a workers' state even though a degenerated one. Isn't that a slight difference? And by the way, Mr. Graham; we do not justify, neither do we support the invasion of Finland.

Yes, the Lovestonites warn the Finnish workers not to trust the Finnish bourgeoisie "who cannot follow an independent policy of revolutionary defense" because it is a pawn of imperialism. But please explain how the workers can fight under capitalist control and still "follow an independent policy of revolutionary defense." In a war one either fights under the control of the capitalist class and thus aids it or fights against the capitalist class in control of the government.

HELPING MANNERHEIM BY "WORKING CLASS" METHODS

The Norman Thomas "socialists" have discovered a method by which they are able to claim that they are not helping the Finnish capitalist government but only the Finnish workers. They ask that help be sent through the Finnish trade unions, whose officialdom—house-broken "socialists"—support Mannerheim. But what class is in control in Finland? Have the trade unions the governmental power? Who controls the army which is the most important instrument of the state, especially during a war? Soft-brained "socialists" tell us that Mannerheim and his White generals have been deprived of power. Can one imagine greater nonsense! The creator of the Finnish capitalist state, the butcher of the Finnish workers, "deprived of power" and—still the com-

mander-in-chief of the armed forces! Even more miserable are the arguments of the Lovestonites, who are proclaiming that the Trotskyites have capitulated to the Stalinists. Coming from the people who up to a few years ago justified every crime of Stalin, including the Moscow frame-up trials, this leaves one flabbergasted. In an article by Donald Graham, in the Feb. 17 Workers Age, we are completely laid low by the profound argument that since we support China against Japan in spite of the fact that Chiang-Kai-Shek is as ferocious a butcher as Mannerheim we can also support Finland.

Far different is the situation where a workers' state is involved in a war with a capitalist state. A defeat for the workers' state means the destruction of nationalized property, a higher form of economy; and no revolutionary Marxist can be indifferent to such a possibility.

The argument is advanced that a defeat of the Red Army by the Finnish army would lead the workers in the Soviet Union to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy. We cannot exclude that possibility but the far, far greater probability is that a defeat of the Red Army by a capitalist counter-revolution.

History knows no example of a union defeated by the bosses in a serious struggle coming under the control of revolutionary workers as a result of the defeat. A defeat of the union by the bosses means the destruction of the union. To be revolutionary defeatism within the Soviet Union is like being for the defeat of a union in a struggle against the boss. All the crimes of a reactionary trade union leadership would not make it any less of a crime on the part of a worker to follow a policy of defeatism in a struggle between the union and a boss.

Will the world revolution gain through a victory of Stalin's Red Army in Finland? That question is supposed to slay all of us who are for the defense of the Soviet Union. We calmly answer: Will the world revolution gain by a victory of the Finnish capitalist army representing the imperialist world? A victory of the Red Army guarantees the continued existence of the first workers' state, thus giving the workers an opportunity to clean out the Stalinist bureaucracy. That will constitute a tremendous victory for the world revolution.

Subjected to criticism, any policy other than that of defending the Soviet Union means either consciously to favor the Finnish capitalist state and thus the capitalist world or objectively to aid the capitalist world by being indifferent to the defeat of the Red Army guarding the nationalized property of the Soviet Union.

WE REMAIN TRUE TO OUR PROGRAM

"How easy it was to defend the Soviet Union before war actually came! And especially when Stalin was playing with the democratic imperialists! Many a time did we issue the warning that the 'friends' of the Soviet Union would scurry to cover when the test of war would come. The Stalinists, the liberals, the 'socialists,' the Lovestonites, all proclaimed us to be enemies of the Soviet Union. Why? Because we insisted on making a distinction between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the Soviet Union.

The war came and all these fair-weather defenders of the Soviet Union find one reason or another for scurrying to cover. It is not so easy now to defend the Soviet Union as it was when Stalin was flirting with the democratic imperialists.

Our party does not adopt a program to be followed only during times of peace. Our program of defending the Soviet Union was based on the fundamental fact that nationalized property makes of the Soviet Union a workers' state regardless of Stalin's crimes. No one has shown us why we should change that program.

THIS CONCLUDES COMRADE GOLDMAN'S SERIES OF ARTICLES.

Beginning with the next issue, Comrade Goldman will answer questions sent in. All readers are invited to send in questions.)

Downtown Labor Forum

51 East 7th Street
New York City
Is the Soviet Union Still A Workers' State?
Speaker:
E. R. FRANK
(National Committee, S.W.P.)
Sunday Eve.-March 17
AT 8 O'CLOCK
Adm: 10c Questions & Discussion

Patriotism In Canada OK for Thomas S. P.

In the "socialist" Call this week we find an editorial fulminating against the latest "peace front" maneuvers of the C.P. and which refers to the latter as the "Russian-American Bund". Just how much of this vituperation is against the treacherous anti-working class policies of Stalinism and how much of it is support of the ideological campaign of the democratic patriots for the coming holy war against the U.S.S.R. becomes evident only from another item in the same issue of that paper. We refer to an item called "Canadian Socialist Election Program" which is reprinted without a word of adverse comment under the ironical heading "World Socialism".

That "election program" is the program of the C.C.F.—the Canadian Commonwealth Federation—brother party in the Dominion of the American Socialist party. It begins:

"For the second time within a generation we are called upon to make the sacrifices demanded by war. The C.C.F. appeals to Canadians: Act now, that these sacrifices shall not again be in vain."

Then, after a few mild protests against the restriction of civil liberties, an exhortation to "make the rich do their part", a complaint that "the government has broken its promise to 'pay-as-you-go' in financing the war and similar planks, the election program winds up with the following paragraph:

"These are the issues which face the Canadian people in the present election. The C.C.F. believes that the war will be won and peace assured only if the military defeat of Hitler is followed by the defeat of Hitlerism and reaction in every land. We appeal to the Canadian people to help us create social and economic justice, both at home and abroad."

A document that the Kaiser's "socialists" of 1914 would have been proud of. Why does the Call reprint it without comment? How does it jibe with its own avowed policy to "Keep America Out of War"?

What, in actuality, is the role and meaning of the pacifism of Norman Thomas and his party in this light?

Our Canadian Comrades Analyze the "Pacifists"

That question can perhaps best be illuminated by a comment printed in the February issue of Socialist Action, the organ of our Canadian comrades of the Fourth International, with regard to J. S. Woodsworth, the counterpart of Norman Thomas in the C.C.F. Woodsworth had declared in parliament, dissociating himself for the moment from the rest of his C.C.F. colleagues:

"I suggest that the common people of the country gain nothing by slaughtering the common people of another country. . . . Personally I cannot give my consent to anything that will drag us into another war."

That was before the war was itself actually under way. When the holocaust was on, he declared again in that same august body.

"The position of the C.C.F. will be stated by one of my colleagues (Coldwell, the leader of the parliamentary group). I say frankly, that with part of that policy I heartily agree, but with some portions of it I cannot agree. Yet I was never so proud to belong to the group with which I am associated."

Here is how our comrades in Socialist Action size things up:

"The social cause for the contradiction between the official policy of the C.C.F. and Woodsworth's public avowal lies in the presence in Canada of a large body of opinion that rejects the war by its failure to accept it with enthusiasm. The C.C.F. National Council under the influence of Coldwell kneeled before the interests of the boss class by supporting the war, but found it necessary to throw a bone to the anti-war sentiment that exists in Canada. Woodsworth was the bone."

Our comrades have given here the clue to the role of pacifism not only in Canada, but universally. Not that of Woodsworth alone, but that of Norman Thomas as well. Like all forms of petty-bourgeois politics that rejects class analysis, such pacifism is only a bell-wether for the capitalist war-mongers and their agents in labor's ranks. In rejecting the class analysis of Marxism: in including Soviet Russia within the same category as Nazi Germany; in confounding the Stalinist party (which in spite of its treacherous and criminal policies is a tendency within the labor movement just as much as the Social Democratic Federation—with Fritz Kuhn's German-American Bund; in speaking the confusionist language of "Red Fascism" and "Brown Bolshevism", the Call is doing a distinct service, not to the struggle against Stalinism nor that against war, but to the imperialist war-mongers.

A MARXIST PREDICTION

"It is not clear that no matter how servile the Zionist movement will be to Britain it will not receive in return the right of unrestricted immigration into Palestine? That is excluded in advance. British imperialism weighs in the balance: 400,000 Jews in Palestine, backed by some part of the 16 million Jews of the world—against 50 million Arab-speaking Moslems backed by the whole Moslem world. Lest the Arabs seek freedom from Britain, the British ruling class diverts them from that path by pre-occupying the Arabs with the Jewish problem. The Jew thus serves Britain as scapegoat in the Near East, as he serves Hitler and Mussolini and the Polish and Rumanian gangster-rulers as scapegoat in Europe. But in return for the collaboration of the most powerful Arab landlords and capitalists, Britain keeps a sharp rein on the influx of Jews into Palestine and never, under British imperialism, will the Jews be freed from that rein. In return for this mess of pottage, shall world Jewry support Britain and lose the friendship and potential alliance with the peoples of Asia and Africa, the colonial peoples everywhere, the oppressed of the earth? No, it is too high a price to pay when the only result is perpetual civil war in Palestine in which a small segment of Jewry faces the Arab masses."

—Socialist Appeal, December 17, 1938.

CURRAN 'UNITY' SPELLS SPLIT FOR SEAMEN

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too high—is cursed by unemployment.

The SUP-MFOW each has a large, well-guarded strike fund. The NMU is bankrupt. Its strike fund was squandered by Curran last summer in his attempt to put down the rank and file revolt in the Gulf.

For the rank and file of the NMU there is absolutely nothing to be gained by continued loyalty to the NMU. That outfit has been revealed in its true colors as an agency of the maritime commission, as a strike-breaking organization, as a dues-collecting racket run by a gang of Stalinists and their stooges.

The rank and file seamen on both coasts can profit through increased cooperation with the SUP and with the national organization created by the SUP, the Seafarers International Union. It is significant that Curran's announcement omitted all mention of the SIU. This is understandable when you know that the great majority of the SIU are rank and file seamen who left the NMU or were expelled for their opposition to Curran's phoney policy and disruptive methods.

It is also significant that Curran's announcement contains the usual blast at Harry Lundeberg, secretary-treasurer of the SUP and leader of the SIU. Yet it was Lundeberg and the SUP rank and file who, more than anyone else, elaborated the policy that strengthened West Coast maritime unions.

Curran's desire for unity is purely hypocritical, a desire to

get his snout into the SUP-MFOW treasury, to gain control of the jobs and the ships these unions control, to strengthen his own position on the backs of the seamen. To do this he knows that he must get rid of Lundeberg and the SIU.

That's Curran's "unity" program. Progress for the American seamen is impossible in that direction. Progress is possible in the direction and under the policy of the SUP-SIU. History has demonstrated this to the American seamen in the last few years.

Out This Week!

March New International SYMPOSIUM:

ON

- THE SOVIET-FINNISH WAR
- THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE SOVIET STATE
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TWU PREPARES GENERAL STRIKE

(Continued from Page 1)

to about three thousand union men. Quill assured the membership that this time the union leadership was not bluffing. If the Mayor sees fit to arrest any of us during the strike there will come ten times as many to lead you from your own ranks.

The leadership had better not be bluffing this time! However, you look at it, the Transport Workers Union is today engaged in a fight for its very life. The membership of the union has responded admirably giving full evidence of their determination to fight for their rights. It is now up to the leadership of the Transport Workers Union to make good on all of the promises they have made to the membership.

Under no conditions must there be a rotten compromise between the union officials and the Mayor. The Union has demanded the recognition on the part of the city administration of the contracts that the union NOW holds with the private transit companies. If the Mayor does not grant this, the union leadership must use the mandates given it by the membership to call a strike and close down every city transportation line.

The membership of the TWU must be on the alert to protect the union conditions that they have won after years of sacrifice and effort. The membership of the TWU must never again put faith or trust in politician "friends of labor" or in any union officials who preach a stupid, suicidal policy of this kind. As in the present fight, they must depend only upon the independent strength and fighting power of labor itself.